DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 752 CS 201 357

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TITLE Describing and Evaluating Classroom Discussions of Poems.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 14p.; Based on author's Ph.D. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers; See related documents CS 201 320-375

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Discussion (Teaching Technique); *Educational Research; English Instruction; Language Arts; *Measurement Instruments; *Poetry; Post Secondary Education; Research Tools; Resource Materials; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *The Research Instruments Project; TRIP

ABSTRACT

Designed to describe and evaluate classroom discussion of poems, this classroom interaction analysis system consist of categories based on the work of Bellack and categories developed by the author specifically for analysis of poetry discussions. Some of the categories include teacher/pupil talk, analysis of solicitation and reaction moves, critical abilities, subject matter, and incorrect utterances. [This document is one of these reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts" to be published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. A TRIP review which precedes the document lists its category (Literature, Teacher Competency), title, author, date, and age range (high school, postsecondary), and describes the instrument's purpose and physical characteristics.] (RB)

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CS 201 352

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
1111 KENYON ROAD
URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801

Category: Literature, Teacher Competency

Title: Describing and Evaluating Classroom Discussions of Poems

Author: LaVonn M. Benson

Age Range: Junior High-Post Secondary

Description of the Instrument:

Purpose: To describe and evaluate classroom discussion of poems

Date of Construction: 1971

Physical Description: This measure is a classroom interaction analysis system consisting of categories based on the work of Bellack (see below) and of categories developed by the author specifically for poetry discussions. Classroom discussions are audio-taped and then transcribed. The analysis is then carried out on the typed transcriptions. The categories of the system are as follows: teacher/pupil talk, pedagogical moves (structuring, soliciting, responding, reacting, return solicitation), analysis of solicitation and reaction moves (solicitation: assigning truth value or qualifying, constructing propositional functions, open comment; reaction: positive, admitting, negative, modifying), subject matter (sense, syntax, prosody, theme/tone, organization, non-critical point, personal criticism, criticism-general), critical abilities (unrelated, peripheral, restatement, explication, interpretation), line count, incorrect utterances (poetic form, critical method, images, senses of words, syntax, basic meaning, reading in).

Coding of the transcripts in these categories permits several kinds of data analysis.

Reliability, Validity, and Normative Data:

No reliability or validity data are reported in the study where DECDSP appears. Validity of the measure derives from its basis in actual classroom observation of

teacher-student interaction and its trials with teacher-led poetry discussions in a number of classrooms. The categories do appear to account for all the "moves" in such a discussion.

Reliability data could be obtained with conventional interrater reliability formulae.

Data are reported from codings of transcripts of six poetry discussions in Nashville, Tennessee, secondary school classrooms.

Ordering Information:

EDRS

Related Documents:

LaVonn M. Benson. Describing and Evaluating Classroom Discussion of Poetry: A Study Using Principles of Literary Criticism. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1971. Order No 72-3022.

Arno A. Bellack, et. al. The Language of the Classroom. New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1966.

DESCRIBING AND EVALUATING CLASSROOM DISCUSSION ON POETRY: A STUDY USING PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

by

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Master of Science

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the

English Department

of the

Graduate School

George Peabody College for Teachers

August 1971

Approved:

Major Professor _____ Date May 24 1971

Minor Professor _____ Date May 24 1971

Dean of the Graduate School _____ Date _____

DESCRIBING AND EVALUATING CLASSROOM DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC POEMS

The category system described here was constructed in 1971 by LaVonn N. Benson at George Peabody College for Teachers. It has been used in an analysis of the discussions of six 12th grade classes with a range of mean I. Q.'s and would probably be suitable for use in grades 10-14.

This instrument is designed to describe class discussions on particular poems and to gauge quantitatively the quality of literary analysis in those discussions. It attempts to provide answers to such questions as these: Who talked--the teacher or the students, and to what extent? What types of "moves" were made in the verbal interaction, and with what effect? What subject matter, from the standpoint of literary analysis, was covered, and to what extent does it conform to teacher/investigator expectations? What level of critical ability is exhibited by participants in the discussion? The instrument does not attempt to analyze non-critical or "off the subject" discussion, even though such peripheral discussion is recognized as appropriate and valuable.

This category system represents an effort to build on the work of certain verbal interaction analysts by developing categories that make use of vocabulary from literary theory in order to describe and evaluate student and teacher poetry discussion more precisely. Although a few items have already been deleted from the original system, additional modification and refinement is needed. Still, analyzing according to this

system provides useful information for teachers as well as for those in research.

In scientific study the investigator should proceed, as in interaction studies generally, by tape recording class discussions of a single poem. Typed transcripts should then be made from the tapes. Each teacher and pupil utterance is then coded according to the seven categories in the system. The degree of reliability in coding should be ascertained by checking the results of independent coders. The amount of discourse can be calculated throughout the system by counting the number of typewritten lines for a given category. The line count measurement for this instrument is a three-inch segment of transcript in elite type.

The Category System[1]

CATEGORY 1--Teacher/Pupil Talk

The ratio of teacher talk to pupil talk is computed by adding the line counts (category 6) for t and p codings. The frequencies as well as lengths of teacher and pupil utterances can also be determined, and the number of extended utterances (at least 40 words) for each can be ascertained.

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[1] Two sources were used in the development of this system. Categories 1, 2, and 3 rely heavily on the work of Arno A. Bellack et al., The Language of the Classroom (New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1966). Category 5 was designed with details drawn from Seymour Chatman, An Introduction to the Language of Poetry (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968).

CATEGORY 2--Pedagogical Moves

Bellack et al. found that the verbal interplay of teacher and students was characterized by basic types of moves: initiatory moves, which can be divided into structuring and soliciting moves, and reflexive moves, which are composed of responding and reacting moves. (Bellack, pp. 16-19) Structuring moves are defined as those which set the context for subsequent behavior but which do not call for a response. These are coded on the transcript str. Soliciting moves (coded sol) solicit a response. Responding moves (coded res) are those which occur as a result of soliciting moves, and reacting moves (rea) are occasioned by any one of the other moves but are not directly solicited by them.

This instrument contains one move in addition to Bellack's--chiefly a teacher move, which has been isolated because it occurs in classes which have high counts in extended pupil utterances and in total pupil lines. It is related to the solicitation in that it gets a response, but it does not ask ostensibly for one. It is occasioned by a pupil response in the way that reactions are, but, unlike reactions, it neither evaluates nor modifies the pupil response. The teacher's behavior in this move is somewhat like that of the non-directive counselor in that the teacher usually takes some of the words of the student's response and repeats them, giving virtually no direction on what should be done with them. This move generally leads students to clarify, expand, or limit preceding statements. This teacher action is called the "return solicitation" and is coded rsol. (The sol label is not entirely arbitrary: the limited evidence on poetry discussion indicates that high frequencies in teacher solicitation correlate with the better discussions,

whereas high frequencies in teacher reaction correlate with poorer discussions.)

One additional symbol may occur in this category. Utterances which are not codable are labeled nc, and such an utterance is not further coded in the remaining categories. Inaudible discourse or failure in the category system to account for the utterance are nc's.

CATEGORY 3--Analysis of Solicitation and Reaction Moves

The parts of the solicitation analysis taken from Bellack et al. have not proved to be adequate, and this part of the system needs to be revised. At this point, however, the utterances coded sol in category 2 should have one of the following codings in category 3:

aq. The solicitation directs the person addressed to assign truth value--yes/no--to the information given in the question or to qualify that information.

cpf. The person addressed should construct propositional functions, as in "What is a ...?"

oc. The person addressed should make a comment. This is the open comment question. (This item is an addition to the Bellack system.)

Reaction moves are chiefly teacher moves. Utterances coded rea in category 2 are analyzed in this category to show whether they are positively toned or negatively toned or whether they modify the preceding statement by clarifying, expanding, or synthesizing. The following symbols, with the meanings indicated, are used:

Positively toned:
- pos--explicitly positive, as "Yes," "Right."
- adm--mildly positively, as "All right," "Uh-huh."
- rpt--admitting by repeating or rephrasing.

Negatively toned:
qal--indicating reservation, as in "Yes, but ..." "Nevertheless..."
nad--not admitting; stating the contrary.
neg--explicitly negative, as "No," "Uh-uh."
Modifying:
mod--clarifying, expanding, synthesizing. (This designation is used rather than qal above when the case is doubtful.)

Procedural actions (pro) are coded in this category, and such utterances are not then further coded. Such statements as "Will you read?" or "Be quiet, Jim," are coded pro.

CATEGORY 4--Subject Matter

Five major headings have been devised for this category to describe the basic critical areas which teachers and students are likely to be working in as they discuss a poem. The first two areas, Sense and Syntax, assume that students studying a poem will, in I. A. Richards' words, "make out its prose sense, its plain, overt meaning." (Practical Criticism, p. 13) Areas 3, 4, and 5 assume that they will work out its intention as an organized structure. Subheads under these five major headings provide for greater reliability in coding and produce data that is fairly specific. The subheads below are appropriate to the poem used in the development of this system, and many of them apply to most short poems. However, the investigator may devise subheads that deal precisely with his experimental poem. The major headings, subheads, and their symbols are as follows:

Sense se
1) denotation of words, 2) the visual and auditory scene, 3) ambiguity in words, and 4) associations-allusions.

Syntax sy
1) kernal structures, 2) other structures, and 3) intonation/pronunciation.

Prosody pr
1) meter and 2) other sound patterns.

Theme/tone th
1) statue/pigeon description, 2) contrasts, 3) permanence, 4) puns/ambiguities/ironic tone.

Organization or
1) space and time, 2) functions of pigeons/irony as or principle.

If the investigator wants to determine to what extent the teacher and students referred to specific lines of the poem in their discussion as opposed to simply discussing the poem in a general way, the method outlined below can be used. Furthermore, if the teacher/investigator wants to know what proportion of the discussion followed the "Lesson Plan" that he has prepared in advance, he can code as indicated to obtain this information. Following the major head and subhead symbols, one of these letters is coded (in "general discussion" no subhead symbol is applicable):

a: specific line of the poem, anticipated in Lesson Plan. For example se2a--sense; the visual scene; line mentioned in this context in Lesson Plan.

x: general discussion of the poem, anticipated in Lesson Plan. For example, se2x--sense; the visual scene; general discussion anticipated in Lesson Plan.

b: specific line of the poem, not anticipated in Lesson Plan.

y: general discussion, not on a point anticipated in Lesson Plan.

These codings are useful for indicating such matters as 1) which classes tend to support their assertions by citing textual evidence, 2) which classes are able to maintain abstract levels of analysis without getting into peripheral areas, 3) which classes tend to propose unanticipated--and sometimes unlikely--interpretations, etc.

Three additional heading are necessary in the subject matter category in order to code discussion that is not specifically on the poem.

The heading Non-critical point, ncp, is used when discussion veers into peripheral areas of interest. Such discourse is of course expected and beneficial, but this instrument does not attempt to ~~classify~~ analyze it. The heading Personal criticism, crtp, is used to provide for personal opinion about the value of the poem. If students support their evaluative judgments, the coding falls under "criticism," if they talk about the poem in doing do. (However, the utterance in many such cases can be coded according to the subject matter headings above.) The heading Criticism-general, crtg, provides for discussion on "the study of poetry." Such matters as how poems are written or how we justify our statements about them are coded crtg.

CATEGORY 5--Critical Abilities

The intention in this category is to provide a means for making evaluative judgments on the quality of discussion on a poem on the basis of the level of critical ability reflected in the discourse. The headings in this category represent a progression from "first principles" used in the reading process, and basic skills in learning, to advanced principles used in poetry reading, and advanced skills in learning. (See Seymour Chatman, An Introduction to the Language of Poetry.) The first two levels do not actually represent critical ability in reading poetry: Unrelated (unr) and Peripheral (per). The first covers utterances of fact, belief, opinion, or private experience which, either within themselves or in the context of utterances preceding or following, are unrelated to the reading of the poem. The second is coded for like utterances which are only loosely related to the reading of the poem.

The third, fourth, and fifth labels in this category are very broad, so that the coder is only required to make a one-out-of-three decision on utterances which are clearly on the reading of the poem. The word restatement, rst, is used for the first of these levels, and the meaning applied, in Chatman's words, is "saying something in other words." (Seymour Chatman, p. 39) Specifics covered by this heading represent "first stage" critical operations: giving the verbal equivalents of words, phrases, lines; giving definitions of words--denotation; identifying syntax--subject-predicate structure. The next critical ability is explication, exp, and it involves critical activities that fall between restatement and interpretation. Specific areas under this heading include restatement of a stanza or of the whole poem; definition of words--connotation and ambiguity; syntax--structures other than subject-predicate; analysis of meter; analysis of metaphor; recognition of artist-is quality in words and phrases; identification of ironic elements. The highest critical ability level, interpretation, int, applies chiefly to synthesizing skills. It includes utterances which deal in the following: synthesis of details of meaning, of metaphor, of connotative meanings, of syntax, of sound structure; identification of overall design or structure; identification of the intention of the whole text; distinctions between the poem's "public message" and the private experience it evokes; supported evaluation of the poem's artistic quality.

Two additional symbols may appear in this category for the purpose of labeling statements that are made about criticism:

crtx: The statement is clearly misinformed or misleading as a statement on criticism.
crtg: The utterance is a statement on criticism, not misinformed or misleading.

CATEGORY 6--Line Count

The number of lines for each utterance is coded in category 6. One line of discourse equals a three-inch segment of transcript in elite type. A single utterance of less than three inches is counted as one line.

CATEGORY 7--Incorrect Utterances

The purpose of this category is to identify and distinguish among the various kinds of invalid statements that speakers make in discussions on a poem. Making such classifications is of course difficult. The symbols listed below, with the designations indicated, represent a tentative effort toward labeling the kinds of deficiencies in poetry reading that may occur when teachers and students discuss poems. A good deal of revision needs to be done on this category. (Two of the classifications, Y and Z, are suggested by I. A. Richards, pp. 310-351.) These letters are coded for incorrect utterances as indicated.

T: poetic form. The utterance distinctly reflects a faulty or inadequate understanding of metrical form and sound structure in poetry generally or in the poem studied. Such statements deal in meter, length of stanzas, sound in words, and the function of any of these in the poem.

U: critical method. The utterance indicates that the speaker has incorrect assumptions about how poetry is read, analyzed, and studied. This classification covers a general area, and, therefore, only the obvious misconceptions are coded U.

V. images. The utterance indicates that the speaker has failed to work out the image either by misconstruing the words or by assuming that the words should be taken literally.

W. senses of words. The utterance indicates that the speaker does not understand the plain sense of the poem because he misunderstands what the words actually designate.

X. syntax. The utterance indicates that the speaker does not understand the sense of the poem because he has not worked out the syntax properly.

Y. falling short of the basic meaning. The utterance indicates that the speaker fails to grasp the tone or intention of a part or the whole of the poem. The speaker has somehow failed to draw inferences from the evidence in the poem. This is a general classification and should be used with caution.

Z. reading in. The utterance attributes meanings to the poem beyond those that can be validated by the poem itself. This classification also covers a general area and should be used with caution.

Strict guidelines are needed to insure consistency in the coding in this category. If an utterance reflects the speaker's inadequacy in more than one area, it should be coded in the most specific area possible. The best practice is to code only the glaring deficiencies.

After the typescripts have been coded according to the categories in the system, computerized data can be used to produce tables comparing the performance of the experimental classes in such areas as these: 1) amount of teacher/pupil discourse, 2) frequencies in teacher/pupil extended utterances, 3) analysis of pedagogical moves, 4) teacher solicitation analysis, 5) teacher/pupil reaction analysis, 6) subject matter, major headings analysis, 7) specific/general discussion in subject matter, 8) teacher initiating moves in subject matter areas, 9) performance in critical abilities, 10) incorrect utterance performance, and 11) teacher/pupil incorrect utterance performance. Various kinds of interesting correlations can be run on the data.